



SEIUHealthcare.
United for Quality Care

March 9th, 2023
Maria Santiago, Direct Support
Professional
Sunrise Northeast
District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Maria Santiago, I live in Norwich, and I am a Direct Support Professional (DSP) at Sunrise Northeast. I've come before you today to ask that you allocate funding for group home services so group home workers like me can have higher wages, pension funds and health insurance.

I have been at my job for 6 years and love the work I do because it's created with love. One of the biggest reasons why my job is so important to me is that I've built trust and relationships with my individuals. I look forward to being with them and feel appreciated when they are so happy to see me. The care I provide brings me a sense of purpose. I help them complete tasks that otherwise couldn't be done on their own, help to provide them with a safe and clean home, and teach them the skills to keep their independence. Our individuals want a high quality and fulfilling life, and as staff we are there to help them achieve that.

I find a lot of turnover at most of our facilities is in relation to the need for more funding. Those funds could be allocated to pay staff a livable wage which would help keep those of us that work hard there, and bring in more quality staff. To give quality care we need to show staff how much they are appreciated for the hard work that they do. A wage that will help them care for their families and take care of themselves is likely to stop such frequent turnover. One of the greatest issues for me at my workplace is not having health insurance. This has had a great impact on my life, especially when and if I get sick. Who is going to pay the large bill I'll receive from the hospital? I'm not able to see a doctor for a check up because I simply cannot afford it. This fills me with worry that I'm not properly caring for myself. No health insurance makes it that much harder to heal and get back to work in a timely manner. It's a shame that I care for other people daily and can't take care of myself. COVID is a storm that has plagued the workforce and we need to

recognize it because when staff get sick , there's no one to show up for our individuals. We need these benefits, as they've become a need for us to survive. Please allocate funding for group home services and its workers so we can have the necessities like higher wages, pension funds and obtainable health insurance.

Thank you.